

THE WILLIAM ROCKHILL NELSON GALLERY OF ART

AND ATKINS MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

NEWS FLASHES

December,

1939

LOAN EXHIBITIONS: Two important exhibitions will occupy the central loan galleries for the period of December 1st to January 15th.

FRENCH 17TH CENTURY PAINTING: In connection with the Wednesday Evening lectures to be given during that period, an outstanding group of French late 17th and early 18th century portraits, landscapes, and genre subjects will be shown in the North and Central Galleries.

Art in the last half of the 1600's in France was dominated by Louis XIV and was formal and monumental in character. Except for a few religious canvases, most of the subject matter was portraiture and it reflected the pompousness of the court and its exaggerated, Baroque background. Charles Le Brun was the artistic arbiter of the age and the high standards that he set resulted in superb painting and technical excellence. From the brushes of the artists of that day, we have a series of portraits of the members of the court and nobility that recreates all the splendor that is associated with the Roi Soleil. It was one of the most brilliant periods of French history. The age that built the perfection of the Chateau of Versailles and the lovely gardens of Le Notre.

All this elegance is seen in the portraits by the foremost artists of the time. Philip de Champaigne, Nicolas Largilliere, Hyacinthe Rigaud, and Pierre Mignard are some of the men who worked for the court and each will be represented in the exhibition. All of these artists were members of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture and were for the most part trained at the French Academy in Rome and carried on Italian influences. Only the Le Nain Brothers remained aloof from this group and painted informal genre pictures of peasants at work in the fields or at the blacksmith's forge and in this were influenced by a Dutch type of subject matter.

With the death of Louis XIV in 1715, a great change came over French painting. Gone was the heavy formality of the King and Mme. de Maintenant; the Italian comedians were recalled and the gayety, charm, even license, of the 18th century took its place. This note was struck first in the exquisite "fete galants" of Antoine Watteau. In them he reflected the new trend of French culture, its lighter tone, the tendency to outdoor entertainments and all fresco feasts. Watteau will be represented in the exhibition and also Fragonard, his closest follower in mood and ability.

Other painters to be included are Sebastian Bourdon who painted the infrequent religious canvases, Perroneau, who excelled in pastels, Drouais whose feminine portraits so caught the spirit of the day, and Oudry who painted magnificent still-life. This exhibition is the first time the majority of these artists have been seen in Kansas City. The canvases will be augmented by engraved portraits by Nanteuil, Morin, Mellon, and Masson from the Gallery collection. Among the lenders to the exhibition are the Toledo Museum of Art, the Wadsworth Atheneum, the Chicago Art Institute, the Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts, the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, Wildenstein & Company, and the Jacques Seligmann Company.

FRANS MASEREEL: So far this fall, the outstanding exhibition yet held in New York is that shown by the Perls Gallery and devoted to recent paintings of Frans Masereel. It received the universal acclaim of all the critics and a number of canvases have already been sold. Fifteen of these paintings will be exhibited in the South Loan Gallery for the month of December.

From the N. A. Gal
Masereel was born in Ghent, Belgium, in 1889. He first gained attention during the World War by his dramatic and moving prints in which he depicted the ravages of war as he had seen them when the

Germans invaded his homeland. Since that time he has gained a reputation as one of the most powerful graphic artists in Europe, working in woodcuts, lithography, and illustrating a number of books. In these, his style is intense and dramatic and they are the more effective and telling because of the simple means he uses. With the exception of an exhibition of his oils in Berlin in 1930, few of his paintings have been seen until now.

In this exhibition he emerges as one of the outstanding painters of Europe. There is a brooding mood to his canvases, the overcast northern skies, the wet sands, and the threatening storm. With deep, rich colours that are as sonorous as a cello, he paints the sailors, fishermen, beachworkers of the Belgian coast and the Mediterranean. His chief interest is in humanity, in those who toil, yet there is no note of pity and he endows his people with that Flemish love of life seen in Breughel. He suggests great spaces, the infinite expanse of the sea, the tang of salt air, and occasionally he turns to small landscapes that are rich and glowing in colour. His sea is hostile, less romantic than John Noble found it. His figures are heavy and powerful, full of latent strength, and even in repose there is a suggestion of impending movement.

Frank Crowninshield writes of this new work, "While Masereel's mission in paint is aesthetic rather than sociological, his picture characters are still the poor and still the workers of the world. His figures, too, are still instinct with power; ready, with an almost swelling energy, to perform their various labors". Masereel's friends and collaborators have been Henri Barbusse, Laurice Maeterlinck, and Romain Rolland, or whom he has painted a stunning full-length portrait.

Kansas City is fortunate to be the first center outside New York to see this important exhibition which will be augmented by some of his best woodcuts and several of his illustrated books.

MASTERPIECE OF THE MONTH: The most important acquisition in the field of painting to be made by the Gallery since the purchase of the Lorenzo di Credi "Madonna and Child with Saint John" will be featured as the Masterpiece for the month of December. It is a tempera panel depicting the Apostle Saint John by the Italian painter, Bernado Daddi.

Daddi, dying only eleven years after Giotto, was practically a contemporary of the great Florentine and is closest to him in style and spirit of all Giotto's 14th century followers. It is only recently that Daddi has received full appreciation for his contribution. Vasari confused him with a later painter and early writers tended to give some of his best work to Giotto. Research has clarified his position and writing of him recently, Van Marle said: "Daddi is one of the most refined painters who may be found in Florence in the early 14th century, a true artist full of sentiment and possessing a keen sense of beauty".

The panel is obviously from a multiformed altarpiece and has a high gabled top and is flanked by two slender twisted colonettes. It represents the Apostle in the act of writing his gospel and the opening Latin phrase can be read, "In the beginning was the world". The single, isolated figure, silhouetted against an elaborately tooled gold background, suggests not only the profound spirituality of the Saint, but also the grave import of the moment chosen. The superbly delineated head with its aura of curly gray hair is inclined toward the book and the beautifully drawn hand is poised in the act of writing. The colour harmony is especially sensitive, warm and vibrant flesh tones, a rich blue-green robe, a wine red mantle with a yellow-green lining. A touch of pure vermillion and bright yellow on the edge of the book are fine accents. Quite out of the ordinary is the inclusion of a second representation of the Saint in a small roundel above the trefoil-shaped arch. Here he is shown with a long scroll and the treatment has all the jewel-like brilliancy of a miniature.

The panel comes from a private English collection and is extraordinarily well preserved. Other panels from the same altarpiece are in a private collection in Germany. There are few representations of the work of Daddi of this size and importance in America. It is the first example from this early period to come to the Gallery collection and forms a most fitting foundation for a survey

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of Italian painting. Thus it becomes an integral part of the Gallery program of making possible a comprehensive study of the history of art by means of most significant manifestations.

WEDNESDAY EVENING LECTURES: The survey of French Painting will continue through the first two weeks of the month. On Wednesday Evening, December 6th, the subject will be The 17th Century, the Age of the Cardinals. This embraces the first sixty years of the 17th century when France was dominated by the art loving Richelieu and Mazarin. They did much to foster a truly French art which was formed of a fusion of the traditions seen in the earlier lectures, plus a marked influence of Italy. The chief men of this period, Simon Vouet, Poussin and Claude, all worked in Rome, but their painting is characterized by that inherent French quality that distinguished such early men as Fouquet and Froment. This period saw a great impetus to ecclesiastic and secular building and the services of all these men were employed in the decoration of these new edifices.

On Wednesday Evening, December 13, The Age of Louis XIV will be treated. This is the period of the splendor of Versailles and the Roi Soleil when all art was regimented under Charles Le Brun. It was primarily a school of portraiture and such men as Philip de Champaigne, Mignard, Rigaud, and Largilliere have left a superb record of the great men of the day. These portraits have the formal grandeur of Louis' court and as such compare favorably with the work of Titian and Tintoretto in Venice a century earlier.

The lectures begin at 8:00 P.M. The Gallery is open from 7 to 10 and there is no admission charge to either the Gallery or lecture. There will be no lectures during the holidays and they will be resumed on January 3rd.

FRIENDS OF ART: There will be only one meeting of the Study Group during December, on the morning of Wednesday the 6th at 11:00 in the Library. At that time the paintings to be submitted to the members at the annual meeting on December 8 will be discussed.

This annual meeting will be held Friday evening at 8:00 o'clock December 8th, in the mezzanine Tea Room. Coffee will be served before the discussion and voting on the annual purchase. Entrance will be by the North Door.

RADIO: The next program in the series of "Intimate Glimpses Into the Lives of the Masters" will be presented over Station WDAF at 9:30 p.m. on Sunday, December 10th. The subject will be the story of Phaeton and Apollo, as depicted in the 17th century Flemish tapestries which hang in Kirkwood Hall.

A special half-hour Christmas program will be presented on the afternoon of Sunday, December 24th, the exact hour to be announced later. The play will be based on the life of Lorenzo di Credi, whose beautiful "Madonna and Child" is one of the great treasures of the Gallery collection. The University of Kansas City and the Gallery will be assisted in the program by the Boy Choirs of Grace and Holy Trinity Cathedral, under the Direction of Miss Mabelle Glenn.

THE LITTLE MUSEUM: "Christmas in South America" will be the December exhibition in the Little Museum for Young Moderns. It will open on December 12th in honor of the Brooklyn Children's Museum in Brooklyn, New York, which is celebrating its 40th anniversary on that day.

There will be no Saturday classes for children on December 23 and December 30.

C A L E N D A R

- Sun., Dec. 3 - 3:30 - Concert - Federal Concert Orchestra
- Wed., Dec. 6 - 11:00 - Library - Friends of Art Study Class.
8:00 - Auditorium - Lecture, "French 17th Cen. Painting - The Age of the Cardinals"
- Fri., Dec. 8 - 8:00 - Annual Meeting of the Friends of Art
- Sun., Dec. 10 - 3:30 - Concert - Conservatory of Music Christmas Convocation
9:30 - Broadcast - The Story of Phaeton and Apollo
- Wed., Dec. 13 - 8:00 - Auditorium - Lecture: French Painting of the Age of Louis XIV
- Sun., Dec. 17 - 3:30 - Concert - Tau Chapter of Sigma Alpha Iota
- Wed., Dec. 20 - No Evening Lecture - Gallery open 7 to 10 p.m.
- Sun., Dec. 24 - Radio Broadcast - Time to be announced.
- Mon., Dec. 25 - Gallery Closed All Day Christmas Day.
- Sun., Dec. 31 - 3:30 - Concert - Kansas City Music Teachers' Guild.

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